**170. Reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.**

*Mr. T. Kumara Pillai* (Member, Kalkulam taluk) prefaced his remarks by saying that the reform of the Assembly had been urged from the 5th session. The last material revision of the rules regarding the constitution of the Assembly was in 1910 (*vide* G. O. No. 546, dated 31st July 1910). Since then *i. e.* from the 7th session, the demand for the re-constitution of the Assembly was insistent. The most important amendment suggested was the placing of the Assembly on a legal basis. The present constitution rested on an executive order. One evil was that the rules were often altered as was evident from the fact that between the 7th and 10th sessions of the Assembly there were issued 5 G. O.'s revising and altering the rules. The main purpose of the Assembly was to ascertain from the agricultural and trading classes their wants and wishes as explained in the original proceedings bringing the Assembly into existence. But that object had not been gained in full, for, under the existing rules, only 43 Members could be elected from the taluks out of 100. In other words, to represent the large agricultural classes numbering about 23 lakhs, there were only 43 Members, while the urban population consisting of 2,74,204 had 19 spokesmen and 10,325 Jenmis were represented by 4 delegates. The taluks should, therefore, be represented by at least 2 Members each, so that there may be 66 Members as before. The object of Government nomination, *viz*, representation of minor interests, was not being attained, as such nominees were not capable of following the discussion or presenting their subjects in an intelligent manner and were not representing their communal matters for which they were nominated. Under section 11 of the rules in force a Member elected as such is to continue till the next election. But what the object of Government was in enacting such a provision required explanation. The lists of voters should be thoroughly examined and revised as contemplated in the rules and the attention of the Dewan Peishkars should be insistently drawn to the matter. The rule regarding time-limit for each speaker should be abrogated. A noteworthy feature of the Assembly representations during the past several sessions was the insistence with which demands were made by several Members of the different communities for Government appointments. Till now, 69 Members had taken up that subject, of whom 49 were Government nominees. This form of public representation was never in the minds of the noble founders of the institution and it was an unworthy motive which, if tolerated, was likely to land the State in a dangerous turmoil of caste and racial troubles from which it would be very difficult to escape. Nor would it be possible for Government to comply with such sectarian or party requests for the loaves and fishes of office, as the number of appointments at the gift of Government was very limited when compared with the overwhelmingly large number of candidates. Even if it were possible, such a system of communal representation in the public service was highly detrimental to efficiency and proper discharge of work. The sole test for Government appointments should be examination qualification, general merit and capacity and such other considerations as would easily make the candidate eligible for the place he applies for and not the accident of his being member of a particular community or caste. The Member then explained in detail the disadvantages to the public in Government disposing of the Assembly representations on the strength of the departmental reports and without any reference to the Members who made the representations. The following alterations to the rules were then suggested :—

1. That the departmental reports called for by Government on the representations of the Members should be referred to those making them and their opinions obtained before they were finally disposed of.

2. That, before the work of the Assembly begins, a general meeting of the Members should be convened with a view to arrive at some definite arrangement in regard to the discussion of the various representations which would be brought forward.

3. That representations bearing on requests for Government appointments should be eschewed.

4. That definite representations previously submitted should be forwarded to subordinate offices and departments and all particulars of information obtained so as to enable answers being given at the Assembly itself.

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